

17. SCHOOL BUS

BASIC REQUIREMENT

FTA grantees are prohibited from providing exclusive school bus service unless it qualifies under specified exceptions. In no case can federally funded equipment or facilities be used.

AREAS TO BE EXAMINED

1. ***School Bus Service***—may be operated only under statutory exception or with non-federally funded equipment or facilities.
2. ***Trippler Service***—may be operated if it complies with specified criteria.

REFERENCES

1. [49 CFR Part 605](#), "School Bus Operations."

QUESTIONS FOR THE REVIEW

1. *Does the grantee operate exclusive school bus service? If yes, does it qualify for one of the statutory exceptions? Does the grantee offer and operate that service only with non-federally funded equipment and/or facilities?*

EXPLANATION

This exception is rare. Very few grantees qualify. Grantees are prohibited from providing exclusive school bus service unless qualified under specified exceptions. To operate exclusive school bus service under an exception from the Administrator, the grantee must demonstrate it operates a school system and also operates an exclusive school bus service with non-federally funded equipment, vehicles, or facilities; that existing private operators are unable to provide adequate, safe service; or that the public entity or its predecessors were engaged in school bus service prior to August 13, 1973. (In operating the exclusive school bus service, no federally funded equipment, vehicles, or facilities may be used.)

REASON FOR THE QUESTION

49 CFR 605

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Regional office staff should be aware if the Administrator has granted an exception. Other information is obtained through discussion at the site visit and during the inspection of facilities and equipment.

DETERMINATION

The grantee is not deficient if exclusive school bus service qualifies for one of the statutory exceptions and is operated with locally funded equipment and facilities. The grantee is deficient if it does not qualify for an exception and operates exclusive school bus service. If the grantee qualifies for an exception, but FTA funded equipment or facilities are used to operate exclusive school bus service, the grantee is deficient.

SUGGESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION

The grantee must immediately cease operating any school bus service that violates the statute.

2. *Does the grantee provide school “tripper service”? If yes, does this service meet the following criteria?*

- *Regularly scheduled mass transportation service*
- *Buses are clearly marked as open to the public*
- *Service has been modified to meet needs of students/school personnel*
- *Service uses various fare collection systems or subsidies*
- *Buses have no special designations (e.g., “school bus,” “school special.” View buses if possible.)*
- *Buses use regular bus stops*
- *Service is noted on published schedules.*

EXPLANATION

The school bus regulations define school tripper service as regularly scheduled mass transportation service that is open to the public, is designed or modified to accommodate the needs of school students and personnel, and uses various fare collections or subsidy systems. Buses used in tripper service must clearly be marked as open to the public and may not carry designations such as “school bus” or “school special.” These buses may stop only at regular bus stops. All routes traveled by tripper buses must be within the regular route service as indicated in the published route schedules. Schedules listing tripper routes should be on the grantee’s regular published schedules or on separately published schedules that are available to the public with all other schedules. School tripper service should operate and look like all other regular service.

If the grantee operates tripper service, verify that the service meets all of the required criteria. Look at the buses used for this service when you are inspecting maintenance facilities. If the grantee states that it does not operate school tripper service, ask how students are transported to school. Does the school district provide bus service? If not, and students ride transit buses, the grantee may be providing tripper service, but may not be identifying it as such. In such cases, ensure that the school tripper requirements are met.

You should also verify that any subrecipients or lessees using FTA funded equipment that has not exceeded its useful life are not deficient with these requirements.

REASON FOR THE QUESTION

[49 CFR 605](#)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The grantee should provide this information. Review the grantee's route maps, brochures, and timetables. Note any signs or markings on buses on the property, and observe vehicles pulling out, if possible. Observe bus service near local schools, if feasible. Also, financial reports may list special school revenue.

DETERMINATION

The grantee is not deficient if school tripper service complies with the above criteria. If the grantee has not complied with the criteria, the grantee is deficient. Note that school tripper service is designed to serve a particular clientele and may do so very effectively. However, it must be operated as regular service or else it is deficient.

SUGGESTED CORRECTIVE ACTION

The grantee must report to FTA on how it will modify service to comply with FTA requirements. The grantee also must revise route maps, brochures, and timetables to show school tripper service and submit copies to FTA.